

Motor vehicle fuel sales, 2020

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Highlights

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had a detrimental effect on the demand for gasoline and diesel fuels in Canada. Following a year of no growth in 2019, the total gross sales of gasoline fell to a 20-year low of 38.6 billion litres in 2020.

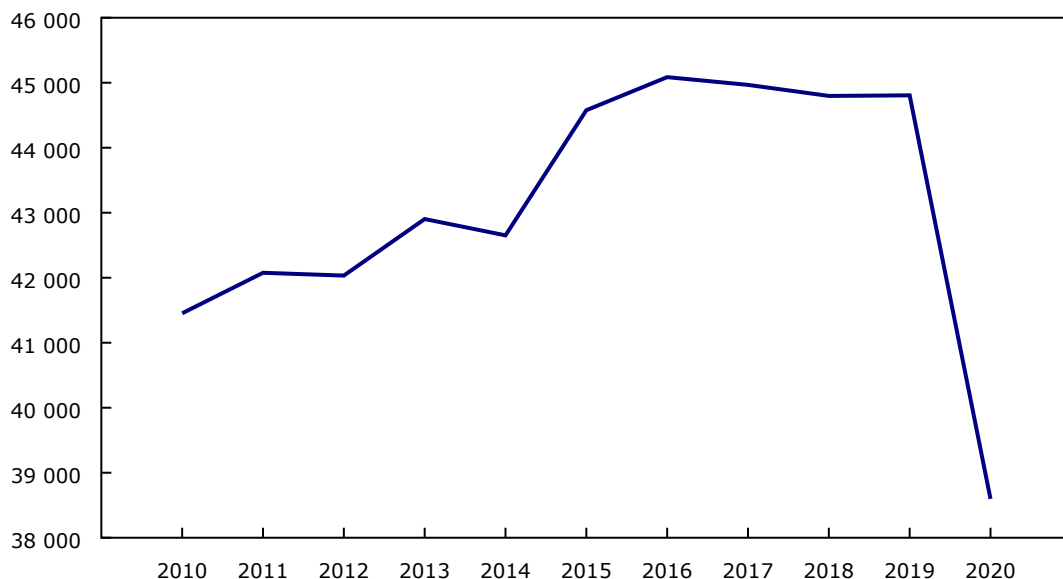
This historic decline in fuel sales reflected several factors, including that more than 40% of the employed labour force was working from home during the initial wave of the pandemic, as well as the lockdowns and restrictions that dampened travel, resulting in fewer vehicle miles driven.

Gasoline sales fall to 20-year low

Nationally, gross sales of gasoline fell to 38.6 billion litres in 2020, a decrease of 13.9% from the 44.8 billion litres recorded in 2019—well below the five-year average of just under 45 billion litres and the lowest volume of gasoline sold in 20 years.

Chart 1
Gross sales of gasoline, 2010-2020

millions of litres



Source(s): Table [23-10-0066-01](#).

Similarly, net sales—on which road taxes were remitted—of gasoline and diesel declined in 2020. Net sales of gasoline declined for the fourth straight year in 2020, decreasing 14.9% from 2019 to 36.9 billion litres. Meanwhile, diesel oil sales were down 9%, reaching 16.2 billion litres, a third consecutive year of decline.



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Motor vehicle fuel sales were starting to plateau prior to the pandemic, with more electric and fuel-efficient vehicles curbing consumption. Nonetheless, the 2020 decline in motor fuel sales can be largely attributed to COVID-19 travel restrictions. Indeed, Statistics Canada's [National Travel Survey](#) indicated that Canadians took fewer trips during the typically busy travel season from July to September 2020 (a 9.6% decrease in domestic trips and over 96% fewer trips to the United States), compared with the same period in 2019.

By contrast, net sales of liquefied petroleum gas rose 15.6% from 2019 to 503.8 million litres in 2020, after posting a 1.3% year-over-year decline in 2019.

Gasoline sales down across the country

In 2020, sales of gasoline dropped in every province and territory. Together, Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia—which accounted for more than 80% of the total gross sales of gasoline in 2020—were responsible for more than two-fifths (-43.4%) of the overall drop in sales. From 2019, Ontario recorded the largest decline, with gross sales of gasoline falling 18% (-3,083.7 million litres). This was followed by Quebec, down 11.3% (-1,016.1 million litres); Alberta, with a decrease of 12.6% (-804.1 million litres); and British Columbia, posting a 9.7% decline (-488.3 million litres).

Note to readers

The purpose of this survey is to collect data on gasoline and other petroleum fuels sold in Canada. Survey data are used by the Department of Finance for the calculation of fiscal equalization payments to the provinces pursuant to the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act and territorial financing for the territories. The data for Yukon and Nunavut were estimated using the national average.

Motor vehicle fuel sales data are available from 1987 onwards for Canada as well as provinces and territories.

The [Transportation Data and Information Hub](#), a web portal developed jointly by Statistics Canada and Transport Canada, provides Canadians with online access to comprehensive statistics and measures on the country's transportation sector.

Available tables: table [23-10-0066-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [2746](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).